(a) whether Government have introduced two new Schemes for direct import of Gold of 18 carats and above ; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) The scheme for direct import of gold of 18 carats and above was notified vide Public Notice No. 257-ITC(PN)/90-93 dated 11th December, 1991 and has been incorporated in the Export and Import Policy 1992—97.

(b) The scheme consists of :

(i) A facility under para 88F of the Exim Policy 1992—97 for post export replenishment of the gold inputs and the studdings; and

(ii) An imprest licensing facility under para 88G of the Exim Policy 1992—97 that permits advance import of gold against expert obligation.

@ Previously Unstarred Question 926, transferred from the 4th May, 1993.

Surplus Staff in Export Inspection Agencies

1479. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that due to liberalisation policy of Government, the staff of Export Inspection Agencies/Export Inspection Council has become surplus ;

(b) if so, the proposed action plan of Government to adjust the surplus staff/manpower ;

(c) whether Government propsoe to allocate extra work of ISO 9000 series to Export Inspection Agencies ;

(d) whether Government also propose to extend the financial help to Export Inspection Agencies till such time it becomes self sufficient ;

(e) if so, what action plan has been chalked out in the matter and if not the reasons therefor ;

(f) whether there is any proposal under consideration of Government for offering Golden Handshake Scheme/Voluntary Retirement Scheme for the surplus staff of Export Inspection Agencies ; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) Pursuant to the Government policy of making the exporters responsible for meeting the foreign buyers' quality requirements, the workload of the offices of the Export Inspection Agencies (EIAs) may get reduced, resulting in surplus manpower.

EIAs are autonomous organisations under the Ministry of Commerce & EIA personnel are not Government employees. Absorption of EIA surplus personnel in Govt. Departments, other Government Inspection agencies or PSUs and other Agencies has been considered and has not been found feasible.

(c) The EIAs are already in the field of providing technical assistance to the manufacturing units in the country for enabling the units to qualify in ISO 9000 series norms.

(d) and (e) No, Sir.

(f) and (g) Proposal for introduction of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) for the staff of the EIC/EIAs including the terms and conditions of the Scheme is under consideration of the Government.

Trade Agreements signed by STC

1480. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the S.T.C. had entered into agreements with a number of companies